

Google Street View:
Handling an extremely high
profile service introduction



justPR

Challenge

JustPR has been working with Google in Sweden since 2005 and in that time had handled a wide range of service introductions but none was potentially more challenging than the introduction of Street View.

Launched in the US in 2007, Street View is a service within Google maps that provides panoramic pictures at street level. The service is being steadily rolled-out globally and the Swedish introduction was in January 2010. When launched in other markets, a number of privacy issues had been raised in the media and there were communications challenges foreseen both at launch and in the following weeks once images appeared online and also when Google's Street View imaging cars began to appear in local neighbourhoods to take the panoramic pictures.

Both Google and JustPR were keen to apply all the learning from previous launches to ensure a smooth and calm introduction that clearly showed Google as an organisation that was listening to its users and was a responsible and caring organisation.

Solution 1.1

JustPR provided strategic advice on the content of all key documentation, and prepared press materials, Q&A's as well as managing the media before, during and after the launch to filter enquiries and channel them appropriately to prepared Google spokespersons.

JustPR was also closely involved in the management of the imagery, planning and preparation of all events, development of a press micro site and handling all questions including those relating to the removal of 'sensitive' images.

In addition JustPR worked with both existing partners and interest groups and helped identify and approach new ones for the launch. These ranged from the Data Protection Agency and Visit Sweden web portal through to property portals and disabled groups. JustPR was also involved in vetting imagery.

Solution 1.2

The overall strategy was to have a full and rapid response system in place to cover every eventuality from providing an answer to all media enquiries with qualified and prepared spokespeople to working with partner organisations to actively emphasise Street View's benefits with practical examples

Stina Honkamaa, country manager Google Sweden explains:

“Preparation is everything in a launch like this. JustPR has years of experience working with Google in Sweden, but also in liaising with senior PR professionals on a European level within Google. They were able to coordinate with them, use their experience from previous launches in other markets and translate this into Swedish circumstances. So we were well prepared and had thought of everything before the launch.”

Results

The introduction of Street View in Sweden was successfully managed with no negative coverage. More importantly, the launch opened up a debate about Swedish privacy legislation where Google was held-up as a shining example of a company that was taking individual privacy issues seriously.

In the days following the launch 50+ pieces of coverage appeared, all of them positive and there has been a constant flow of news mentioning Street View and/or anticipating more cities and areas being covered.

Google has also strengthened the existing relationships with partners who were involved in the launch, and forged new ones as a result.

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